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The Anglican Communion Guidelines on

Ecumenical Participation in Ordinations

The following guidelines were written by the Inter-Anglican Standing Commission on Ecumenical Relations, a body appointed by the Instruments of Unity to oversee ecumenical work both internationally and by the churches of the Anglican Communion in December 2004. They were adopted by the Primates and Moderators of the Anglican Communion at their meeting in Northern Ireland in February 2005, and are commended to the Provinces and Churches of the Anglican Communion.

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The following guidelines are addressed to situations in which Anglican bishops and priests are invited to participate in ordinations of clergy in churches outside the Anglican Communion, or in which clergy of churches outside the Anglican Communion are invited to participate in Anglican ordinations.

Recognising that such acts can have wider consequences than originally intended, and in response to many requests from bishops and others for guidelines and clarifications concerning the standards for individual Anglican bishops or priests participating in such ordinations, or clergy of other churches desiring to participate in Anglican ordinations, IASCER commends the following guidelines for adoption throughout the churches of the Anglican Communion.

These guidelines are not intended to address situations in which a church of the Anglican Communion is engaged in a process leading toward the establishment of communion with another church or churches. In these cases, Anglican churches are requested to consult with IASCER in advance of such participation.

Guidelines:

1(a) It is appropriate for Anglican bishops, when invited, to participate in episcopal ordinations or consecrations in churches with which their own churches are in communion, including the laying on of hands. Within this ecclesial context, the laying on of hands is an indication of the intent to confer holy orders, and a sign of the communion that we share.

1(b) Anglican bishops should refrain from participating in the laying on of hands at the ordination or consecration of a bishop for a church with which their own church is not in communion. Ordination is always an act of God in and through the church, which from the Anglican perspective means that bishops are representative ministers of their own churches. Ordination is not the individual act of bishops in their own persons.

1(c) Similarly, bishops from other churches not in communion should not take part in the laying on of hands at the ordination or consecration of Anglican bishops, for the collegial and sacramental sign of the laying on the hands by bishops belongs within the context of ecclesial communion.

1(d) Anglicans welcome the participation of bishops from other churches in the Liturgy of the Word and elsewhere in celebrations of episcopal ordination or consecration. Their very presence and prayers are valued ecumenical signs, even when the present state of ecclesial relations does not permit the interchangeability of sacramental ministries.

2(a) It is appropriate for Anglican priests, when invited, to participate in ordinations of presbyters in churches with which their church is in communion, including the laying on of hands. Such acts are a sign of the communion that we share.

2(b) Anglican priests should not take part in the laying on of hands in the ordinations of ministers of word and sacrament in churches with which their own church is not in communion, because such an act belongs within the context of ecclesial communion.

2(c) Similarly, ministers from churches not in communion should not take part in the laying on of hands at the ordination of Anglican priests, because this too belongs within the context of ecclesial communion.

2(d) Anglicans welcome the participation of presbyters and other ministers of word and sacrament from other churches in the Liturgy of the Word and elsewhere in celebrations of priestly ordination. The very presence and prayers of such ministers are valued ecumenical signs, even when the present state of ecclesial relations does not permit the interchangeability of sacramental ministries.

IASCER
Montego Bay,
December 2004

The Primates' Meeting
Dromantine,
February 2005